

WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

FEBRUARY 2018
Volume XIII Number 24
Editor: Jeannine Simon

From your editor:

This is the winter of our discontent, I think. I will let Rabbi Frank discuss the appropriate topics of pain and anger. I will only talk about his comment that you cannot unlearn to ride a bicycle. The last time I rode a bicycle, I ended up falling in a field of daisies, in Italy, in the middle of army maneuvers, while shots were ringing. I never did go back on a bicycle.

On Friday, February 16, 2018 at 7:30 pm at Jeanie Ritter 2 Washington Square, apt. 6H Larchmont, NY 10538, join us for a Shabbat service led by Rabbi Frank Tamburello. Please bring some dessert to share (Jeanie will provide tea and coffee). Space is limited, and WCHJ members have priority.
See below for the forthcoming events in March.

Rabbi's Corner - January, 2018

Managing our Pain

*“ The clinging to injurious habits is a sickness of character or of judgment. And its eradication must be sought in the same way and with the same earnestness as that of a more tangible sickness.” -
Jewish Science and Health*

There is a whole chapter devoted to the subject of pain in Rabbi Lichtenstein's book, *Jewish Science and Health*. I would like to present some thoughts of the spinal surgeon Dr David Hanscom regarding this topic. Dr Hanscom notes that pain creates a rapid, protective avoidance-reflex action. The impulse travels from the source of pain through our peripheral spinal nerves, up the spinal cord to our brain. Pain will continue to stimulate our nervous system until our problem is resolved. Unfortunately, like an athlete, artist, or musician learning a high-level skill, our body memorizes the pain impulse and becomes more or less permanent. It is similar to learning how to ride a bicycle. You cannot *unlearn* how to ride it.

Within a few months, pain impulses become deeply etched in our brain as the neural pathways become programmed. Because the brain works by association, anxiety and anger then become linked not only to each other but also to the neural pain pathways. Pain then reinforces both of these emotions, so any stress will fire up the pain circuits. Many patients readily acknowledge that their pain worsens when they are upset.

Because of this neural programming, a person's success in getting rid of chronic pain hinges upon their success at learning how to process anger.

And it is not possible to be free of pain until this link is addressed. The first step is to be aware of our anger. Since people don't like angry feelings, we often attempt to suppress or disguise them. But we cannot disguise our anger for long. The more legitimate our gripe, the more difficult it is to let it go—and truly deep acceptance becomes

even more challenging when we are in chronic pain. Fortunately, many tools exist to help us work through this process.

Forgiveness is the “continental divide” of chronic pain. A deep acceptance of the person or situation we believe has wronged us is critical. It does not mean we have to learn to like this person or agree with what happened. It simply means that we must finally allow ourselves to move past the situation and the emotions it triggered.

When we are angry, we are disconnected from the best part of who we are. As the anger festers, we may also become disconnected from our friends and family. Instead of seeing these loving people as a support system, they often become a target for our rage. Many people initially report feelings of a high degree of social isolation. Research shows, not surprisingly, that when people feel socially isolated, the same part of the brain is active as when they are in chronic pain.

Since anger is only about us and our survival, being caught in it makes seeing the effects anger has on those around us—especially close friends and relations—impossible. This is the essence of abuse. Anger is brutal to people who are dependent on us. Reconnecting with our friends and family is the antithesis of anger and also part of the forgiveness process.

Fortunately, this neural programming is not *all* hard work. While pain pathways are permanent, so are pleasure pathways. Since play and anger are not compatible, spending time on pleasurable pathways is a powerful way to move off negative neural pathways.

The bottom line is that chronic pain and anger separate us from our life. But it is possible to reclaim our lives and reconnect to those close to us *without* bringing the pain along. People heal each other. Pain doesn't have to be our permanent state of being.

Events and Membership

Here are some excerpts from the letter Dmitry sent recently:

On March 3 we will be celebrating **Purim** We need actors, so please let me know if you're available. You don't have to memorize your lines—you can just read from the script. This is your chance to be a star!

Pat Hammer will not be running for re-election as a board member-at-large. Please let me know if you would like to be on our board. By being on our board, you will be able to more easily share your ideas about what our congregation should be doing (of course, we welcome input from all members, but being on board places you much closer to the action). In addition to elected officers (president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, and two members-at-large), the board also consists of committee chairs, who are appointed by the president. Please let me know if you would like to either run for office or serve on a committee.

We have made reservations for Wednesday, March 28, at the El Dorado III restaurant in Scarsdale for our model Passover Seder. Please save this date—details will be forthcoming.

Rabbi Frank Tamburello

Board of Directors

Dmitry Turovsky	President
Ann Toffel.....	Vice-President
Olga Turovsky.....	Treasurer
Jeannine Simon	Secretary
Diane Steinfink.....	Member-at-large
Patricia Hammer.....	Member-at-large

Committees

Programs and Membership

Diane Steinfink

Deewest126@yahoo.com

Publicity

Charlotte Klein

Charlotteklein48@gmail.com

Hospitality

rotating

Next meeting of the *History Buffs*: February 17 at 10:00 at Ann Toffel
16 Quincy Lane White Plains 914 948 3332. The book to be
discussed is: *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok

For general information or questions

Please contact Dmitry Turovsky,

713-8828

aristophil@yahoo.com

or search our website, wchj.org

Dates 2017/2018, 5778/5779

Here is a list of *tentative* dates for the coming year, both for celebrating the Holy Days and for programs:

Shabbat at Jeanie Ritter	February 16
Purim	March 3, CUUC
Model Seder	March 28 tbc
Yom Ha Shoah	April 13 CUUC
Shabbat	May 11 tbc
Shavuot – talk on Gene Wilder	May 19 CUUC
Bukharian Jews in Queens	May outing tbc

Directions

COMMUNITY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION
(468 Rosedale Ave. White Plains, NY 10605)

- Take the Hutchinson River Parkway to Exit 25 for North St.
- Follow the sign to White Plains (LEFT if you are traveling NORTH. RIGHT if you are traveling SOUTH) onto North St.
- At first light, turn LEFT onto Rosedale Ave.
- Go one block and look for WHITE sign for Community Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Turn right onto Sycamore Lane to parking lot.

or

Take Hutch to Mamaroneck Avenue toward White Plains. Take right on Rosedale Ave. About one mile to white sign. Turn left on Sycamore Lane to parking lot